U.S.A.

- (march 2023) **Why banning TikTok is a bad idea**.

The main reason to ban TikTok is the fear that the Chinese government will take hold of data about the users. Nobody is planning to ban Google, Facebook, Amazon and countless other corporations that routinely store data about their users, so somehow it's ok if US corporations harm Internet users but not ok if the Chinese government does so. I happen to believe that US corporations are way more effective in harvesting user data than the Chinese government. Worse: those US corporations are generally free to sell those data as they like. Many websites collect users data precisely because their main source of revenue is to sell those data to anyone who wants to buy them. Whenever an app insists that there's a new version and you should install it, there's a good chance that they simply found a more efficient way to spy on you and sell your data. China and any other government can buy those data, which are way more than what China can get from TikTok. If China wants to know whether someone like me ever posted about Tiannamen Square or Taiwan independence, China doesn't need to spy on my TikTok activities: it can simply buy data about my online life from one of the many companies that sell those data. Those data probably contain even more information that we ourselves remember about our online behavior. While China's ability to gather users data from TikTok is only hypothetical, China's ability to purchase data about me from third parties is very real, and lawmakers are doing nothing about it.

This grotesque ideas are similar to the idea of banning Huawei products in the USA because they could be used by mainland China to spy on US citizens, forgetting that most chips sold by US chip manufacturers (e.g. Apple) are made in China, and therefore China could have implanted something in those chips.

There are on average 3,000 chips in a modern car. Most of them are made in China.

But I digress. Back to TikTok.

The second motivation for a ban of TikTok is that it could be used by the Chinese government to spread Chinese propaganda. This is almost embarrassing. Of course, the Chinese government can use ANY social-networking platform to spread propaganda and disinformation. Russia did it and in 2016 even got its favorite candidate elected president. I am sure that China did it, and many other countries (even friendly ones) probably did it. But the logical way to respond is to simply use the same tools to spread our propaganda to them. US agencies could bombard TikTok with millions of videos about the Tiannaman Square massacre of 1989, or videos about the prosperous and democratic Taiwan, and videos about the president of Taiwan (virtually unknown in mainland China). During the Cold War the USA did not ban radio: it used radio to broadcast propaganda into the Soviet Union.

Some lawmakers are saying that they want to protect US children from TikTok's perverse influence. Many of us laugh out loud: the number-one threat to US children is the 300 million guns owned by US citizens. These are the same lawmakers who oppose gun control and are responsible for countless shootings in schools.

Cui prodest? TikTok is the world's most downloaded app and US social media like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Snap are probably freaking out that TikTok is the future and they are being left behind. Banning the world's most popular app would certainly help them survive. These are ugly, stupid, obsolete social media that have indeed caused great damage to society.